

GEORGETOWN ORTHOPAEDIC SPINE SURGERY

AFTER SURGERY INSTRUCTIONS

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Thank-you for choosing the Georgetown Orthopedic Spine Center to help meet your health care needs. We want to know how you are doing. Now that you are out of the hospital and convalescing at home, please do not hesitate to call your physician's nurse if you have any concerns. Contact numbers are listed above. A Georgetown physician is always on call to assist with any emergency after hours, holidays or weekends. If you have a problem after hours or weekends that can not wait until the office opens between the hours of 8AM – 5PM, call 202-444-8766. Call our office immediately if you:

- 1) Have significant drainage (more than just a few drops) and / or odor from your wound.
- 2) Have increased redness/swelling at the incision site
- 3) Have a fever greater than 101 degrees
- 4) Have new or unfamiliar pain or weakness in the arms or legs.
- 5) Have unexplained incontinence (“accident”) of bowel or urine, are unable to urinate, or have new onset of pain or numbness in the rectal, vaginal or scrotal area.

POSTOPERATIVE INSTRUCTIONS: Refer to the specific instruction sheets that have been provided to you for your particular surgery. What follows are general guidelines for all spinal surgeries.

PAIN EXPECTATIONS: A sore throat often occurs after intubation for anesthesia. After all surgeries, inflammation is a natural process of healing. We cannot and do not want to block this process. Please know we can take the “edge” off your pain, but we cannot stop *ALL* your pain. With each day that passes, you will get stronger and oftentimes, must simply be patient as nature clicks off days on the calendar. You need to be encouraged by the “good days” as the “bad days” get further apart.

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MEDICATIONS: If you need a medication refill, please call your surgeon's office by 3:00 p.m. NO NARCOTIC REFILLS WILL BE GIVEN OVER THE WEEKEND OR AFTER 3:00 P.M. WEEKDAYS. Please leave the following information on voicemail if no-one is able to speak to you directly: 1) your name, date of birth and contact telephone number; 2) The medication you are requesting; 3) Your pharmacy phone number including area code. If you have been given antibiotics (only a minority of patients are prescribed antibiotics postoperatively), take them until the bottle is completely finished.

FOLLOW UP APPOINTMENTS: Unless otherwise indicated by your physician, your first post operative appointment will be approximately 2-4 weeks following your surgery. Most often, an appointment will have been made during your last appointment to see your surgeon before surgery. If it was not, please call your surgeon's secretary to make an appointment within the first week or so after you are discharged from the hospital.

INCISION CARE: Check your incision at least twice daily for the first 2 weeks for any sign of infection. These signs include increased warmth or redness to the area, swelling, discharge, or unexplained increasing pain in the incision. You may change the dressing the day after you return home (if you have one). A small amount of reddish-brown drainage is not unusual for 1 to 2 days. If the incision is dry, leave it open to air. Please report any other type or amount of drainage to our office. The dressing may be discontinued 24 hours after the incision stops draining or spotting. Showers may begin 2 days after the drainage stops. Avoid tub baths or pool immersion until seen by your surgeon at the first postoperative appointment. Please gently dry the incision area. Do not apply creams/ointments to the incision unless instructed to do so.

THERAPY: For the majority of spinal surgery patients, walking is the only exercise we want you to do during the early healing phase, unless otherwise directed by your surgeon or listed in the specific instruction sheet. Continue the abdominal and leg isometrics you were doing the hospital. For some patients, a physical therapist may come to visit your home in order to check for the safety of your home environment.

OTHER NON-SPINAL PROCEDURES/ OPERATIONS: If possible, avoid any other elective (i.e., non-emergency) operations or dental procedures until they have been discussed with your spine surgeon. If you have a non-spinal emergency that requires treatment, we recommend that any other physician planning surgery or your dentist use the American Heart Association guidelines for antibiotic prophylaxis, especially if your spine operation included spinal implants (rods, plates, screws).

WORK FORMS: If you have work forms that need to be filled out, your surgeon's office can help you with these.

XRAYS: Any radiology films (Xrays, MRIs, CT scans, etc.) that you have provided to us for your surgery will be returned to you following your surgery.